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AND THE SACRIFICE



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THE CUP AND THE SACRIFICE

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Sermons

THE CUP AND THE SACRIFICE,

AND OTHER SERMONS ON THE WAR,

BY

E. L. A. HERTSLET, M.A.,

VICAR OF RAMSGATE.

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TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

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I.

THE CUP AND THE SACRIFICE

Preached in WESTMINSTER ABBEY on Sunday
Evening, August 16th, 1914, and in ST. BONIFACE,
ANTWERP, the following Sunday.

THE CUP AND THE SACRIFICE

ST. MARK X. 38 & 39.—

“ Jesus said unto them, ‘ Ye know not what ye ask: Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ And they say unto Him, ‘ We can.’ ”

THERE are few instances so fine as this of a great challenge accepted and made good. The Lord of Life is going to His Death, and on those who have loved and followed Him, there falls for the first time the silence of fear. At last He has told them plainly where His journey leads, and what is awaiting Him at the end—“and as they followed they were afraid.” And then the solemn silence of that journey to Jerusalem is broken by a mother’s prayer for her two sons: “Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee’s

children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, 'What wilt thou?' She saith unto Him, 'Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on the left, in Thy Kingdom.' "

The hopes which burned in every Jewish patriot were still aflame in the hearts of these young men. Hardly yet—in spite of the strange words of coming conflict and pain—had they realised that His Kingdom was not of this world. A kingdom there was—of that they were sure: a dawning of a far-off glory behind whatever discipline might lie ahead: a victory which centred round the Man Whom they adored. And they claimed to share it.

They knew they were committed to a great Cause and a great Master, and so they knelt on, and offered the petition which meant so much more than they could know. And He Who never turned

aside from any prayer, however ignorant, or badly-phrased, or faltering, bids them face the meaning of their desire and accept His own conditions, before they register their vow.

"Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And to that challenge they return the simple answer, "We can." And then and there on the road from Jericho the mighty pledge was given: "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." The pledge which after-years saw ratified, when the discipline that hallowed and the pain that glorified bore witness to the truth of that brave "We can."

Men saw in days to come how well that vow was kept by the children of Zebedee, and how they shared to the uttermost in the triumph of their King. Leaders they had craved to be, pre-

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eminent in the glory of the great Cause in which they trusted. And leaders indeed they were in the Kingdom which endures. To the one there came the summons to the short, sharp conflict of the steel and the Martyr-death,—the leader of that little company in the Baptism of Blood. The first page of Christian History bears the bright record in one short line: “He killed James the brother of John with the sword.”

To the other, the close friend and faithful lover, came the harder discipline still,—to drink the cup of waiting, to endure the long delay, to taste the bitterness of dark and anxious years alone,—gentle and disciplined and loving to the end. But at last for him, too, the pledge of long ago was redeemed in full, and St. John came into his Kingdom.

They knew not what they asked, but they both had caught a glimpse—dim but certain—of the Great Ideal, and staked their all upon it: and GOD was faithful.

Surely there is much in this story which finds an echo in our hearts to-day. We have had to meet—if ever any Nation had to meet—a great challenge. A challenge to our honour and our sacred obligations; a challenge to strike for liberty of friends, for righteous dealing among nations, and to cleanse the world from an intolerable aggression. And we have accepted the challenge, not in any boastful or contemptuous spirit, but with stern and eager readiness to do our best.

In this strange, unforgettable fortnight, we have learnt many wonderful things. We have experienced the purifying shock of a great crisis; the inspiration of knowing that we are still great enough to sink all superficial differences in the deep unity of one great National resolve; the solemn joy of realising that the whole Nation—the whole Empire—is one, in its readiness for sacrifice for the King we serve and the Country we love.

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It may be that in the past—in those old days of peace, which now seem so far away—we have made claims both for ourselves and for the England we hold dear, claims which were ignorant and over-bold, which seemed indeed presumptuous. We knew not what we asked. But, please GOD, behind “the frantic boast and foolish word” there lay deep down a steady faith in our National Ideal. And to the challenge laid upon us now—to accept the discipline of pain, to be ready to go through the fire of affliction, in pursuit of our bold claim to make it good—the Nation has answered quietly and reverently, “We can.” And the Lord of Life and Death will take us at our word. “Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.”

We have chosen our destiny, and accepted the conditions on which all sovereignty is based: readiness to suffer and willingness to serve. And so we step

forward in that great allegiance in which faint-hearted looking back can find no place.

To many of our brothers the choice we have made may mean—must mean—the swift and glorious passing to share the Baptism of Blood. GOD help us to remember with brave hearts and lips when those lists come in, that Death in a great Cause, Death for a great Ideal, is GOD'S own way of Victory. They share the supreme initiation of the King.

To the rest of us there comes the other side—the discipline of waiting. That is the test we have to bear to-day. The challenge is ours no less than theirs: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink of?" And we are quietly trying to answer, "We can."

We enter on the test with awe. The experience of the crucial days we have just passed through, gives good hope that even when the discipline is inevitably sharpened, and the testing-time prolonged,

we shall not wholly fail. We have to be strong to endure those things which perhaps try the courage and test the faith of men even more than the strain and stress of action. Parting, suspense and silence; the daily self-control in little things; the stifling of our own anxiety for the sake of others; the difficult test of daily duty well done at such a time; the schooling of impulse into habit of sharing our resources, whatever they may be, with all in need. We must answer, at whatever cost, to the Call of Brotherhood to-day.

“ We must march, too, shoulder to shoulder,
If a frail sister slip, we must hold her,
If a brother be lost in the strain
Of the infinite pitfalls of pain,
We must love him, and lift him again.”

And with it all and above it all, we throw ourselves back on GOD. We are learning again that for all our deepest needs, there is indeed

"No help but Prayer :

The breath that goes beyond this iron world,
And touches Him that made it."

The one great impressive fact stands out above all the misery and sin of these dark hours, above the anxiety and eager waiting and splendid silent service—that the heart of the world is turning in Prayer to GOD.

We cannot help it, being what we are. The purifying fire is already at work. The veils with which we cloak the soul in days of selfish ease are torn and swept aside in the hour of our need, and we know ourselves once more for what we are—just children in the Hand of our Father, Who loves and greatly cares, Who alone is "the Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea."

We do not need the evidence before our eyes to tell us this is true: the volume of Intercession going up day by day in London; the crowded Churches

in Brussels and in Paris; the Belgian despatch-riders finding time to say their prayers in Ste. Gudule before they hurry away again to their gallant fighting line; the old Priests confessing soldiers by the wayside in Alsace. All these are but the outward signs of the deep truth which always re-asserts itself in human life: that man in his need must arise and go to his Father, and throw himself back on the great fact that underneath are the Everlasting Arms.

Those on whom the responsibility rests for our own Church and Nation, have been trying to guide this universal instinct to find its best expression. On Friday next we shall be making a solemn and universal supplication to GOD as the act of the whole Nation. Think what a mighty contribution that will be to the cause we hold so sacred. No one can limit, even in imagination, the force of such united Intercession. No one will willingly fail to bear his part in such

corporate Prayer as the War goes on. In the special forms of Services and Prayers which have been drawn up, there is much that may guide and stimulate and control. But above all, it is in the deep cry of our very hearts from day to day and week to week, that we shall have power with GOD and shall prevail.

It will help us in that wrestling-time to remember this story of that mother and her sons on the road to Jerusalem. Brave prayers will be going up—mothers for sons, wives for husbands, friend for friend. It may be we are unaware how bold they are, those prayers—how potent far beyond our dreaming: for it is still true that in our simplest petitions, we know not what we ask. It may even be that they will seem to go astray.

That mother thought her prayers had gone astray when, a few days later, she was called to stand beneath the Cross, to see her King crowned with thorns, with one on His right Hand and another

on His left. What a travesty it seemed of all her hopes! Yet there she stood on Calvary itself, trusting blindly in the dark; and she was early at the Tomb on the morning of Easter Day, and knew in days to come—in this world or in Paradise—how more than fully answered her prayers had really been.

And so with us. The obvious answer may not always come. The answer we crave for may seem to be denied, and instead we may be summoned to the Cross. But we, too, have pledged our faith to Him Who knows all—Who reigns, and loves, and understands. We have accepted the conditions of sure victory. The answer to our prayers—the best answer—will most surely come, “beyond all knowing of them, wonderful.” And here—or there—we shall see of the travail of our soul, and shall be satisfied.

II.

A BESIEGED CITY

Preached in ST. BONIFACE, ANTWERP, on
Sunday Morning, August 30th, 1914, during the
advance of the German hosts upon that City.

A BESIEGED CITY

II. KINGS XIX. 20, ff.—

*“ Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel :
That which thou hast prayed to me against
Sennacherib King of Assyria I have heard.
This is the word that the LORD hath
spoken concerning him . . . Whom hast
thou reproached and blasphemed? and
against whom hast thou exalted thy
voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high?
even against the Holy One of Israel . . .
But I know thy abode, and thy going
out, and thy coming in, and thy rage
against me. Because thy rage against
me and thy tumult is come up into mine
ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy
nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I
will turn thee back by the way by which
thou camest.”*

WAR brings men and women face to face with realities. Its fierce flame withers into ashes the flimsy substitutes for faith with which the world has always tried to satisfy or drug the soul that stirs within it.

Its stark grimness shatters our self-satisfaction, and challenges our blind forgetfulness,—or, worse still, our clumsy patronage of GOD. Before it the conventional disguise of years goes down, and we are pulled up short and made to face the most momentous of all questions—what is our Religion worth? We have no use now for airy modern theories about GOD, and dilettante speculation about Life and Death,—the casual theology of the club and the tea-table, and the sixpenny magazine.

We are flung back on the great Foundation Facts. Do I really believe in GOD at all? What does it mean to me that He has revealed Himself as an Eternal Father,—a GOD of Justice, as

well as a GOD of Love? Can I throw my whole soul into believing that it means literally everything to us, that we can to-day commend into His Hand the men who go out to fight for us, and the Cause wherein their King and Country send them? Do I know that I, and those dearer to me than life, may now—even as David did—dwell under the defence of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty? May even I also hear the firm assurance given to Joshua—to be strong and of good courage, for the Lord thy GOD is with thee whithersoever thou goest?

You and I have got to face these things to-day—with an outlook cleared of all the fogs and fantasies with which in softer days we choke our spiritual vision. We want the stern candour of primitive days: the frank faith of the men of old who walked with GOD and heard His Voice across the storm. Men who in their time dominated and dwarfed their

generation, because they were the seers,—the men of vision—the interpreters of things unseen.

Please GOD, we are already learning many things these days which will give a permanent nobility to life. We are readjusting our outlook and our perspective, and things which we thought old, are being made new. And one of the very simple obvious things which GOD is bringing out of His Treasury through the discipline of to-day is surely this: That it is at a time like this that the Old Testament comes into its own again.

What pitiful rubbish we have talked about it! What time we have wasted discussing the details of destructive scientific criticism,—for the most part raised in Germany, gaping at the knees of the sceptical professors of that enlightened Fatherland! We have busied ourselves about the mere fringes of the mighty structure,—just the binding of the Divine Library—interesting in itself, but wholly

secondary to the eternal truths which it enshrines. Or if we have got further than the binding, and opened the Book itself, we have so often contented ourselves with probing its less comely parts, and gone our superior way contemptuously, like men who think they have explored a palace when they have just made a note of its sinks and dust-bins.

And all the time,—there it has stood—and we see it now,—the sure Word of God—purified seven times in the fire. That half-Bible on which the Hope of the World based His Perfect Life,—the meat and drink of Him Who lived by every Word that proceeded from the Mouth of GOD. Who toiled and taught and agonised “that the Scriptures might be fulfilled,” and Who died with the words of a Psalm on His Lips.

What should we do at a time like this without the rough, strong, simple faith of those staunch old Prophets,—or the never-failing comfort and benediction

of those self-same Psalms? There must be many here, who during the past week* have felt anew the splendid certainty of that old assurance: "Thou shalt not be afraid of any terror by night,"—or "for the pestilence that walketh in darkness," . . . "He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers: His faithfulness and Truth shall be thy shield and buckler"; or as we said in the opening Psalm in our service just now: "Blessed be the LORD my Strength, Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

And then again and again in these Sunday-lessons just now from the Old Testament, we are almost startled by the supreme—almost contemptuous—confidence of the stern old prophet, in the face of dangers parallel to, but more acute than our own.

To these men GOD was the supreme Person in life—His justice,—His power,

*The first Zeppelin Raid on Antwerp took place on August 24.

—yes, and His terribleness,—and above all, His deliberate protection of those who trusted Him,—were the ordinary commonplaces of life. To them, the sin, the folly, the greed, the cruelty, of men were preposterous and odious insults to the Majesty of the GOD they served,—to be rebuked and defied without fear or favour—to be crushed and punished for the cleansing of the world. Look at the magnificent picture we had last Sunday morning of Elijah on Mount Carmel. His solitary defiance of the prophets of Baal—the sun-god—one against four hundred-and-fifty—taunting and despising the followers of him whom his worshippers called “Lord of the World,” and turning in deep disdain to put to cowering Israel the simple issue: “If the LORD be GOD, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him . . . And the God that answereth by fire, let Him be GOD!”

Or the story again of last Sunday night with its sequel of this morning.

The greedy monarch with his many possessions coveting the little plot of Naboth's vineyard, and the cruel murder of the man who dared to resist the pressure of Ahab, and refused to put his scruples up for sale. And there is the dauntless figure of the prophet once again,—alone as always,—glowing with his holy anger, standing out for Justice and Mercy and the Honour of GOD,—flinging out his protest at this outrage on the rights of man,—and foretelling the inglorious end of the aggressor on the very spot which his ruthless cruelty had defiled.

And to-day, after hearing the solitary witness of Micaiah the son of Imla, we have seen the violation of Naboth's vineyard avenged at Ramoth-gilead, while the dogs of Samaria inflict the last indignities on the body of the murderer, in the very place which had first aroused his fatal greed.

Or once again, look at the story

which I read as a text this morning, the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem just two thousand five hundred years ago. The mighty hosts of Sennacherib have swept across the little state which had defied the power of Babylon, devouring it with fire and sword. His overwhelming army has reached the last stronghold of Judæa, and is encamped around Jerusalem. And the King in despair begs Isaiah the son of Amoz to place the matter in the hands of GOD. It seemed to the terrified garrison of Jerusalem a forlorn hope, but to the serene faith of the man of GOD, the issue had been placed in sure hands, and was never in doubt.

You have heard his calm confident answer this morning, as recorded in the Book of Kings. You may read it again word for word in the Book of Isaiah itself, the noblest and most far-seeing of all the Books of Prophecy. There is the ring about it of that supreme faith which no danger however imminent could

cloud or daunt. To him, one thing stood out above all else, that GOD was the King of all the earth, that to Him alone it belonged to give victory,—that He could save by many or by few. “Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel: I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.”

In the tablets found in Nineveh, Sennacherib has not only left us a picture of himself at the head of his famous army, which you may see to-day in the British Museum, but also an account of his campaign against Judæa which confirms in remarkable detail the Hebrew story which we have known all our lives. The mysterious disaster to the invading army which terminated abruptly the siege of Jerusalem, baffled the ingenuity of the Assyrian sculptor, but we may be sure it was no mystery to Isaiah!

It was not till some two centuries later that a successor of Sennacherib learnt

from a successor of Isaiah the truth which had been for so long the life of Israel, when in the far exile by the waters of Babylon, Daniel bore his unflinching witness before Nebuchadnezzar, and the frenzied autocrat learnt by the bitter degradation of insanity, the deep lesson which Kings and Emperors still at their own great peril forget,—“that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” The confession of Nebuchadnezzar as his sanity returned, and the mania which had afflicted and sobered him left him with a sound mind, stands true to-day . . . “And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto Heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever and ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed

as nothing : and He doeth according to His Will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His Hand, or say unto Him, ' What doest Thou ? ' At the same time my reason returned to me . . . "

How long ago it seems to most of us since we first learnt—(in the sheltered atmosphere of home or school)—to know and honour those old heroic figures, Joshua, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel !

There were giants in the earth in those days, and we numbered these spiritual giants among our childhood's friends. Has their memory grown dim in later years, along, perhaps, with our childhood's faith ? Well,—to-day we sorely need to quicken them both again. We need to-day just that spirit which fired those calm, strong men of old. They stood for the great realities in days of ruthless stress. We need, too, to get back to our childhood's faith in the GOD whom they feared and served so faithfully. We are

their heirs in the faith, their successors in the long line of those who are called to be sons of GOD. We sing their Psalms and their Canticles; their lives and writings are bound up with the sacred heritage of Christendom. Their GOD is our GOD. Their whole national hope and destiny was to provide a human home for Him Whom we adore as their Saviour and ours.

And what shall we say of our faith compared to theirs?—we knowing what they so long desired in vain to know. All that indomitable strength of purpose, that splendid simplicity of faith: that resolute tenacity in pursuit of Right,—because it was Right—in scorn of consequence. All these things were theirs, long before GOD had drawn near to the world in the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. They never knew what we know, that the GOD before whom they stood is not only the GOD of Holiness and Judgement, but also the GOD of Love.

They never knew what we know, that the Word of GOD, (their constant inspiration), would reveal Himself in Human Flesh to hold out before men for ever the mind and character of the GOD of Heaven. They never knew of Bethlehem and Calvary, and the Garden of the Resurrection. In all their wars and tumults they did not live to know (though Isaiah saw Him afar off) of Him Who was to be the Prince of Peace.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, GOD having provided some better thing for us, that they without us, should not be made perfect.”

It is reserved for us to add to their faith,—knowledge. It has been ours to have seen and known the perfect Example of Strength made perfect in weakness, the true triumph of supreme self-sacrifice, the final victory of Love over Death.

We lift up our hearts then again to-day to the trumpet call of those ancient days,—shamed by our fears, confessing

the littleness of our faith. Let our Nicene Creed mean more to us henceforth when we confess our belief in the Holy Ghost "who spake by the prophets."

Those strong servants of God, knowing so little and believing so much, beckon from the heights to us who know so much and believe so little.

We will try to-day—and in days to come—to commit ourselves and our Cause to God, as simply and fearlessly as they would have done.

Does anyone say—"But our adversaries, too, are calling on the Name of the Most High God to bless their arms against us?"

Then in all reverence and without fear we answer: Let God judge between us. Let God take the Cause into His Own Hand and judge between us and our enemies, and we are not afraid of the issue. Let Him Who readeth the secrets of all hearts weigh in His sure Balances the worthiness, the righteousness, the

justice of their Cause and ours. Let Him weigh, too, the purity of motive and the mercifulness of spirit with which they and we have drawn the sword. Then—like Isaiah—we have no fear of the issue.

But,—when the issue is decided, and God in His Holiness has spoken, let us not in our Day of Deliverance forget the new bond between us made,—the new and sacred bond between us and God, forged and tempered in the fire of our great need. It will hold true then, as it holds true now. “This GOD is our GOD for ever and ever; He shall be our Guide unto death!”

III.

THE CITY OF GOD

Preached in the PARISH CHURCH, RAMSGATE,
on the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, 1914
(" Mayor's Sunday.")

THE CITY OF GOD

REVELATION I. 17 & 18.—

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His Feet as dead. And He laid His Right Hand upon me saying, Fear not; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

THE vision granted to St. John in the Isle of Patmos on that Sunday long ago, bears its great message for the men of to-day, no less than it did for him and the Churches of Asia. We need, as he did, the grace of vision,—the power of being able, in all the storms and perplexities of life,—to see the controlling Power behind it all, and to know the certain end.

From his island-retreat St. John could look out over the blue and silver waters of the Mediterranean. He could watch the ships hurrying by,—the argosies of Corinth and Antioch, carrying the world's merchandise,—the galleys of Rome flashing back to the sun the brass of Cæsar's legions. And over there on the mainland, across the narrow streak of water, he saw with the keen vision of the seer, the baleful glare of a great war.

It was not the clash of war as we know it, or the hideous pain of the stricken battlefield, which shook the soul of the old Apostle and wrung from him his burning words of prophecy,—but it was war none the less. For out there on the mainland of Asia Minor lay the far-spread strongholds of the mightiest foe of the infant Christian Church,—the shrines of the Emperor-worship of Cæsar, with its sordid priesthood, and its sinister political cultus of a world-religion and a world-power, which threatened to engulf and

overwhelm the fragile outposts of the Cross of JESUS Christ. So potent was it to be for evil, so ruthless in its malignity against those who named the Name of Christ, so threateningly powerful in its insolent pride in the great Empire at its back, that to the vision of St. John it took shape as the arch-enemy of the Most High GOD: its iniquity flamed to Heaven as the smoke of a great furnace: its shrines were the seat where Satan dwelt. Its power was the power of hell and of death: its hosts were ranged in deadly conflict against the armies of Heaven.

Such was the situation and occasion of the great vision of the Book of Revelation. Rising above the loneliness of exile, the weakness of old age, the oppression of solitary witnessing against great odds, the sickness of hope deferred, the man, who in days long ago had leaned on the Breast of JESUS, and had been near to the Heart of Christ,—flung

out to the world, as a permanent message and an undying inspiration for all the ages to come, his sure vision of the great Truth,—satisfied,—triumphant,—undismayed. It came to him then, with vivid certainty, that all was well with all that he held most dear. The Master he loved and served was indeed “alive for evermore”—controlling, ruling, conquering. The keys of hell and of death were in Hands that he could trust. The solution and the issue of the great struggle were in an absolute control. And so the messages went out of the spirit of JESUS to the sorely-tried Churches of Asia Minor, as they echo still to the Church of to-day,—with the assured promise in each case of the reward which stands for “Him that overcometh.” The Lord GOD was riding forth conquering and to conquer, the Kingdoms of this world were even then becoming the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

And as we look out to-day from our

island-home and note the significant parallel which the world is offering to the problems which beset the soul of St. John, it is for us to see something of the splendour of His vision, and catch the echo of His sure confidence and triumphant hope.

But while the victorious assurance of the Revelation certainly holds good of a great physical struggle of right against might, and of honour to plighted word against treacherous lust of world-power—yet St. John is primarily speaking of the great spiritual warfare which is the heritage and pride of the Church Militant here on earth, the wrestling not against flesh and blood, but the fight against principalities and powers of darkness,—against spiritual wickedness in high places. Yet the ultimate conditions of triumph are the same, as indeed is the one sure goal on which the eyes of all GOD'S combatants are fixed.

If you look then at the Book of the

Revelation as a whole, two great facts stand out, to which I wish to draw your particular attention this morning.

The first is this: That the true mark of the seer—the man of vision, who can face all warfare undismayed,—is intimate personal devotion to his Redeemer. Whether it be actual physical fighting, or the permanent spiritual struggle of life, these things can only really be faced and borne and triumphed over, under the touch of that Right Hand of Him “Who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore.” “He laid His Right Hand upon me, saying, Fear not.”—Such was the meeting, after long years of patient faithfulness, between the Risen Master, and the “disciple whom JESUS loved.” The thrill of that personal contact with his Lord, cleared the eagle vision of St. John, and he saw the grand issue of the great struggle: he saw the inevitable outcome of the fiery trial: he saw the beast chained: he saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from GOD. And that brings me to the other great fact which marks the Book of this unique Prophecy. The vision of the new earth which crowns the Revelation, is the picture of an ideal *City*. It is a vision of corporate holiness. The goal of the pilgrim is to have the right to the Tree of Life, and to enter in through the gates into the City.

.

I venture to think that these two great facts, standing as they do for the crowning experience of human life as a whole, yet have a special bearing on the true meaning of this annual service here to-day.

Each year, early in November, we have the privilege of welcoming here officially, the newly-elected Mayor of the Borough, the members of the Corporation, and other office-bearers in our municipal life. The custom is a happy one, and of infinite value to the whole town. It is

exactly the right inauguration of a new year of high responsibilities which now rest upon selected and representative townsmen,—chosen for their capacity, their power of leadership, and their willingness to spend and be spent in the common good.

I venture to maintain that while our thoughts naturally dwell to-day on our corporate life as a whole, the first and deepest needs in facing the problems which lie ahead are the needs of a man's own intimate personal life. No thoughtful man, of whatever religious up-bringing, can face public responsibility,—least of all can he face it in this the gravest year of all our history,—without a profound sense of his own need of constant contact with the Source of all true strength and life. If he is to do his duty as a public citizen, he must keep true and clean his ideals as a private individual. The more faithfully he bears his public burden, the more deeply he feels the necessity of the

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intimate personal strength which comes from GOD. "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness,"—and the Spirit, too, of "holy fear." That, I take it, is the primary, deep-down need of every one of us, which our presence here expresses to-day. We need the spiritual endowment of the seer before we can see our visions, and solve our problems, and go forth conquering and to conquer. "He laid His Right Hand upon me saying, Fear not."

And then comes the other side of the picture, the completion and climax of the rest. What a splendid and inspiring thing it is to know that the goal for which our life is set, is an ideal citizenship! The warmth and glow of mutual intercourse and interchange of service, of all that goes to make up the best happiness of corporate life, and the fellowship of man with man,—all is there reproduced, purged

and strong and beautiful,—in the City “through the gates” where the long road ends. All have their own contribution to bring to that City Beautiful. The Kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it: the boys and girls play in the streets thereof: all the sons and daughters of men, who have come through their tribulation and their robe-washing and have won their right to the Tree of Life. We are training ourselves here and now for an ideal citizenship in an eternal city: “and there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination, or maketh a lie,—but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

How fares it with our training here to-day?

I cannot presume to speak now of the many secular and official duties which belong to the effective administration of a great Borough like this. I stand in the presence of experts. And in their capable

hands we are well content to leave them. But I am able to appreciate the even more intricate and delicate moral problems which they have to deal with for the good name and fame of the town which they control and guide. Some three years ago, it fell to my duty to study intimately certain returns on all these questions from all the seaside towns of East Kent. The problems, with very little variation, were almost entirely similar. From Romney Marsh right away round to the mouth of the Thames, the same tale was told, the same sense expressed, of the enormous responsibility and acute difficulty thrown upon all our Kent coast watering-places by the problems of what is called "the season." On the one hand the necessity of encouraging and providing for the huge influx of visitors, on whose coming and on whose amusement so much of the livelihood of our towns depends,—and on the other hand, the proper facing and solving of the

grave questions such as over-crowding, and immorality, and the general lowering of tone, and other dislocation of our local life, which the season involves. Well, we have to face these things with courage and with hope. It is our common duty. It is a great thing to realise quite clearly that the problems are *there*. And to realise, too, that it is our clear duty to throw ourselves heart and soul into coping with them fearlessly, and eliminating, so far as in us lies, all that is evil. Remember, we are in training for *corporate holiness*, for the citizenship where there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.

As a Christian township, it is as much a matter of honour to keep high our standard of public morals, as it is a matter of honour to keep wholesome and honest our individual private lives. The City Beautiful, you notice, has its own standard to which it expects those to

conform who desire to sojourn there. There are certain things which it insists must be left outside. It is our business to have our own standard too: a standard to which quite unflinchingly we expect those who sojourn here to rise, and not a standard lowered as expediency may suggest, to suit all comers and all tastes.

Never, perhaps, in the whole history of municipal life, has the position of our public men been so difficult, so responsible, so full of tremendous possibilities, as it is to-day.

The history of the past three months has been a revelation of the acute responsibility which may rest on the shoulders of civil authorities, and the magnificent way it may be faced. At home the whole Country has looked to them for bold initiative in all sorts of strange and complicated ways, and it has not looked in vain. The issuing of appeals for relief on an unprecedented scale, and the administration of funds,

both public and private, which have poured in on every hand : the organisation and encouragement of recruiting : the maintenance of provision for public order and public safety : and a host of other things which call for wise heads and warm hearts and hard work. And look across the water, and see what a new romance and dignity has been added lately to the honourable story of civic life, and what a fine standard of quiet courage and calm devotion to duty in the face of real calamity and terrorism has been set by the Burgomasters of Belgium. It is good to call them to mind to-day on the Name-day of their heroic King. Burgomaster Max of Brussels has become a household word in Europe for the ideal attitude of a brave Mayor in circumstances of unparalleled difficulty and stress. To save a Capital from ruthless destruction ; to restrain a civil population from acts of resentment, which would have inevitably resulted in

wholesale massacre; to compel by sheer force of personality even a German Commander-in-chief to treat you with respect,—these are deeds which any man in public office would think worth living for.

Others, too, such as the martyred Burgomaster of Aerschot, have died for their Country quite as calmly and heroically as soldiers on the battlefield.

Others again,—such as the Burgomaster of Tirlemont (I think it was), who, the day after his own wife had been murdered by the invaders in cold blood, interfered personally to protect and save the life of a German prisoner from the fury of the outraged population,—have set an example of that high chivalrous forbearance and knightly gentleness, which a man can only learn from our Lord Himself.

Great then as your task is at this great time, the inspiration of these solemn days is even greater.

The vision is still ours of the Risen

Conqueror Who holds the keys, and, please GOD, in all the stress of life to-day we shall never let it fade. The assurance is still ours of the pledged reward to "him that overcometh." And the goal is clear ahead for which all our experience now,—in Church life or civic life, at home or abroad,—is the training time and school of preparation. "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the City."



IV.

THE MORNING WATCH

Preached in the PARISH CHURCH, RAMSGATE,
at the Watch-night Service on New Year's Eve,
1914.

THE MORNING WATCH

PSALM CXXX. 5 to end.—

“I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for Him : in His word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord : before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch. O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy : and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel : from all his sins.”

MIDNIGHT on New Year's Eve. That is a solemn moment always; it is of peculiar solemnity to-night. Look back over all the past years that you can remember,—I care not how many they may be,—and you will not be able to find another New Year's Eve like this. Never has there

been a year so great, so eventful, so tragic, as the year which has now only a few minutes to live,—never has a year been so full of tremendous possibilities as the one which will have opened before we leave the Church to-night. And so we feel that *this* is the proper place in which to spend the moments of transition from 1914, great with all its wonderful memories,—to 1915, great with all its wonderful hopes.

How strange it is to look back and realise the extraordinary experiences which may be awaiting us, which we approach all unconsciously and unknowing, till suddenly they are upon us, and all the face of life is changed. I cannot help thinking as I look back, how I stood at this hour two years ago to-night, talking to a crowd of British sailors at their midnight service in Antwerp Docks. How little we thought then that the mighty flow of the world's commerce into that great port would in the near future be

completely paralysed, and the very room in which we stood be soon converted into a hospital full of soldiers wounded in Belgium's fight for life. Or, one year ago to-night, how I climbed into the belfry of Canterbury Cathedral with the Archbishop who always holds a little service up there with the bell-ringers at midnight on New Year's Eve. How little we thought then, that the year we waited to welcome on our knees would bring the great world-convulsion so long dreaded and anticipated; and that the quiet old city asleep beneath us would, before the year was out, have its quaint little streets choked by day and night with men in khaki, and be the winter quarters of ten thousand troops in arms.

Yes, it is strange to look back at an hour like this, back over the years of strange experience which makes up each individual life, and stranger still to look back over the past five months with all their tears and blood and broken hearts,

and all their glory and self-sacrifice and deathless heroism. No New Year's Eve, we say, has ever come like this. It is a wonderful thing to be alive to-night.

What have you learnt in the experiences we have had this year? What are the voices of the dying year which must live in your heart, and echo in your ear for all the years to come? Surely, if you have learnt nothing else you have learnt this: a new belief in *man*.

You have seen this nation of ours—which was getting dangerously soft and rich and easy-going, selfish and quarrelsome, and short-sighted—split up into small and unheroic factions, led by small and unheroic men; you have seen it shaken and shocked and stirred into noble life by the discipline of a great challenge and a great resolve. You have seen the glow of sacrifice kindle in unaccustomed eyes, and you have known that at last you were seeing England at its best. However selfish and petty your own life

may have been, however deep you may have drunk of life's bitterness, or smeared your soul with sin, you have been given a new respect for human nature,—a new *belief in man*. Keep it, and take it with you in the years that lie ahead. Never let yourself be robbed of the new truth you have learnt about your fellow-man, for it *may*, nay it *shall*—be true of *you*. Why not? You have deep down in you somewhere the same power of recovery that the nation as a whole has shewn, of steady growth in self-sacrifice and self-control, the same capacity to find your real self, and of saving your soul alive. GOD help you to save and keep that treasure from the lap of the dying year,—your new ideal of manhood,—your new belief in man.

And, you will take with you too,—will you not?—a new *belief in GOD*? What is the meaning of that unique offering earth will present to heaven on Sunday next? Just think of it,—almost

the whole world at prayer! Not only the men of every religious denomination in England, not only the whole English-speaking world throughout the Empire and America, but the Churches of France and Belgium and Russia as well,—all kneeling with one heart and one voice on the first Sunday of the year to commit themselves to GOD.

It means nothing less than this,—that the world is finding a new Faith in GOD *because it needs Him*. Face to face with unexampled strain and tragedy, face to face with sorrow and suffering and death on a scale he has never known before, man staggers in his weariness and horror to the Feet of GOD. The nations lift their eyes in their new-found unity to the one Eternal Father strong to save. A new and simpler Faith is dawning on the world. Faith in a GOD of Love, a GOD of Mercy, a GOD of Justice, a GOD of Righteousness—that is the only thing which can keep the world sane as it

sets its teeth to suffer and endure. And because the world needs that Faith, it is finding it.

Are you sharing to-night in the world's new and great discovery as you step over the borderland and face the unknown days ahead? "I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for Him : in His Word is my trust." That is the simple, calm, confident Faith which we want as we face the new year together. "My soul fleeth unto the Lord : before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch." That is the message of this solemn midnight hour. "O Israel, trust in the the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." There is the old, old message from the heart of GOD, of mercy and forgiveness, and the ever-ready help for the clean new start.

And the darkness grows less dark, and we can take the road again, and face the strange unknown courageously,—

as we hear the last assurance which covers our deepest need of all :

“And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.”



V.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

I. HONOUR

Four Sermons preached in ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
RAMSGATE, in Lent, 1915.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

I. HONOUR

ST. MATTHEW XVI. 26.—

“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

IN years to come, when statesmen and historians, poets and philosophers, look back with enthralled interest on the Great Epic of 1915, they will often wonder what it was like to be living in those days, and no doubt will often confess to pangs of real regret that they were born too late to share the experiences

and to learn the lessons of the men and women who were set to live their life during the great European War. It is always difficult to understand that you are really witnessing the making of the world's history, or to realise the supreme importance of contemporary movements and convulsions, which to the men of after years stand out as the historic land-marks of the world's life.

I suppose it has always been so. So it was in the days of Noah. They ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away. The devout Jew went quietly ahead with his preparations for the Passover while the side of the dead Christ was pierced by the Roman guard on Calvary. The Roman Cæsars held their gorgeous games in the Colosseum while the Huns and Goths were sweeping southward to change the face of Europe. The dainty court of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette danced

and flirted and played cards with the red flag of revolution at the Gates of the Tuileries. English ladies danced happily in the Hotel de Ville at Brussels on the eve of Waterloo. The current of life, with all its claims and interests, flows on so naturally, and for most of us so normally,—that it is intensely difficult to realise that the hours are big with fate, and that we are living in a period which will stand out as one of the greatest epochs of human history till the end of time.

It is natural that it should be so; it is almost inevitable, and in many ways it is right and wholesome. It is for most of us a plain duty to see that life *does* go on as normally and naturally and happily as possible at such a time: that is one of the quiet services we civilians can render to our King and Country in their hour of need.

“Give us grace to fulfil our daily duties with a sober diligence” is what we pray for.

But at the same time we also pray:
"Give us grace that we may with a ready will *learn the lessons which Thou art teaching us.*"

Our great danger will lie not in the direction of failing to carry on the usual small activities of life, though, like our predecessors in times of crisis, we may take them too light-heartedly and flippantly. But our real danger will certainly be of failing to learn the lessons GOD is teaching us,—failure to hear the voices of this wonderful time,—failure to listen to the challenge of the war to the Christian soul.

Think how terrible it will be, how utterly disastrous,—and yet how very British!—if when the war is over we forget and fall back into our old easy-going ways, and revert to our old low standards, and our old smug self-satisfaction. "If thou hadst known—even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" There is, please GOD,

still time for us to know before they are hid from our eyes.

And that is why during the quiet thinking time of Lent, I am anxious that we should try to take each week some great outstanding challenge of the war which has rung out to the English nation, and to make it our own possession for all the days to come.

And the first we take to-night,—
“HONOUR.” On a nation’s sense of honour, depends that nation’s *soul*. In the dark days at the end of last July and the beginning of August the great choice was offered to two European nations, to choose between shame with ease, or honour with suffering. Belgium had everything to gain from a worldly point of view by offering no armed resistance to the passage of the German hordes, and everything to lose by opposing it. But there was no hesitation in her choice. She was pledged by her word of

honour to defend her own neutrality by force of arms, and she chose honour to safety, she preferred to lose the whole world than to lose her soul. "So you have lost everything," says the Emperor in that wonderful *Punch* cartoon after the fall of Antwerp. "Not my soul," replies the indomitable King, whose word of honour was his bond, whose loyalty to that bond has discovered a nation's soul, and who to-day, with everything lost save honour, stands out before the eyes of the world as the first gentleman in Europe.

A few days later the same choice was given to the English people,—to choose between a shameful repudiation of a nation's honour, or to defend that honour to the death. England was pledged by the same bond, which had been so nobly made good by Belgium, to defend by force of arms any violation of the neutrality of that land. The land was violated by the unscrupulous aggressor

on August 1st, and England was called upon to make her choice. For some dreadful hours it seemed as if England would choose wrong. Incredible as it seems, England, so long hypnotised by self-complacency, so long absorbed in her own affairs; England,—(or those who in those days spoke for England),—seemed to hesitate between safety secured by shame, and honour saved by sacrifice. By the mercy of GOD, England did not hesitate long. What would it have profited her to have gained the whole world and lost her own soul? Who would not rather be a citizen of an extinct Belgium, than the citizen of a sleek and flourishing empire which had allowed Belgium to become extinct? And so the true England made her choice: her soul against the world. And the whole Country lifted up its head with a new self-respect, as it saved its soul alive. And Owen Seaman was able to sing when the die was cast:—

“England, in this great fight to which you go,
Because, where honour calls you, go you must,
Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know
You have your quarrel just.

“Others may spurn the pledge of land to land,
May with the brute sword stain a gallant past;
But by the seal to which *you* set your hand,
Thank GOD, you still stand fast!”

And so it is for honour that our great travail is upon us now. It is for honour that the little country across the Channel has been tortured and ravished and ruined from end to end. It is for honour that children have been mutilated and women wronged, and old men murdered, and a whole people starved or exiled. It is for honour that our English lads are enduring the screaming horror of the trenches, the agony of frost-bite, the shattered limbs and maimed bodies, and all the unimaginable strain of such a war. It is for honour that our clean splendid sailors are plunged into the icy waters of the North

Sea—a thousand at a time. It is for honour that English homes are desolate, and English mothers have broken hearts, and English girls are widows, and English children fatherless. . . .

Honour.—Do we yet realise how sacred that word is now? Must it not always have a sanctity all its own, bought with such a price, radiant with so much suffering, “crowned with the glitter of steel and the glimmer of tears”?

Surely the first challenge of the war to the Christian soul is the challenge for a new sense of honour. Can our sense of honour ever become too delicate now? Can we ever again in matters of honour become too scrupulous?

We, whose destiny is less heroic, have surely much to learn from these boys and men who are dying for a “scrap of paper!” Surely we can only be more worthy of them and their cause by facing quietly at home in our own life what honour really means. Our sense of honour

can be so quietly and imperceptibly blunted and dulled.

In the competition of life or trade, in the scramble to get on, we can so suddenly do the mean, the unscrupulous thing if we are not alive to a delicate sense of honour. We would be really startled if we could suddenly see how easily we can smirch and stain it, how cheaply we sometimes hold our honour and our soul.

People can spoil the happiness of a whole home by a selfish disregard of honour, or they will take away the character of innocent people—(far better than themselves)—by cruel slander or malicious suggestion, or idle gossip flying from lip to lip. They do not always start it,—but they have not the sense of honour to *stop* it. They would far rather repeat it than refute it. Surely the reason why liars are always mentioned in those dreadful lists of people excluded from Heaven, is the fact that a liar can only

be a liar when he has strangled his sense of honour, and has thereby lost his soul. Think how easily quite nice people will stifle their sense of honour and do a mean thing. How they will waste time for which they are paid, and borrow little sums which they forget to repay! How they will descend to that most cowardly of all devices,—the anonymous letter! How they will break promises, and reveal confidences, and impute unworthy motives, and stab their enemy in the back!

For the sake of those who are shewing us now the worth of honour,—for our own soul's sake,—let us pray for a conviction of our sin against our honour—let us agonise for a clean, wholesome, delicate, scrupulous sense of honour—towards man and towards GOD.

Go back to the 15th Psalm,—the “gentleman's Psalm.” There you have the man of honour: The one who is worthy to dwell in GOD'S tabernacle and

rest upon His Holy Hill: The uncorrupt man—the truthful man—the sincere man—the humble man—the man of his word.

Such a man may let the world go—for he has gained his own soul. “For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” For such is the vision of GOD.

If only it can restore to English men and women, aye, and can breed in English children, a new, keen and scrupulous sense of honour: of all that honour means: of all that honour is worth: then for us, the anguish and the agony, the madness and the terror, the sorrow and the discipline of the greatest and most terrible convulsion of history will not have been useless. One challenge of the Great War will not have been made to us in vain.

VI.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

II. SACRIFICE

Also

Preached in ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR,
18th March, 1915.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

II. SACRIFICE

ST. JOHN XII. 24, 25; 32, 33.—

“ ‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life. . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’ This He said, signifying what death He should die.”

OUR "Challenge of the War" tonight is SACRIFICE.

It is perhaps one of the plainest to read, and the hardest to understand. It knocks at the door of rich and poor alike, and lays its hand with sterner pressure day by day on the world's heart. It is in the air we breathe; it stares out at us day by day from the sheets of every newspaper and the faces of our friends,—sacrifice. We know it is the necessary sequel to the other voices of the war,—it is the price to be paid for a nation's honour. It is offered at the call of *duty*. But the price is so great, the offering so far beyond all reckoning, that we are almost bewildered by its magnitude. And that bewilderment may easily settle down into fretful complaining or dull despair, or the hard callousness which comes from getting accustomed even to things that are beyond experience terrible. The fact is, we can only keep our balance and learn our lesson, and

understand the true meaning and power of sacrifice by going to the Cross. It takes us a whole life-time to learn what the Cross stands for, but we have the chance of penetrating far into its mystery and its meaning by the experiences of to-day.

Take your stand then with that little company of men and women who followed the Lord of Life on that last journey to Jerusalem, and learn from Him how to face the challenge of sacrifice. And surely the first thing of all which comes home to you as you follow His strong calm vision, is the necessity of *counting the cost*. Our Lord never attempted to disguise from Himself the true magnitude of the sacrifice which lay ahead. The lurid clouds hung over Jerusalem,—black with the shadow of death, cold with the terror of the world's guilt, menacing with the unthinkable horrors of exposure and shame and spitting, and utter loneliness and fierce agony. He knew it all, and

shrank from it. But when the time was come, He steadfastly set his face to go. He knew it meant parting from His Mother and His friends. He knew it meant the straining to its uttermost His human endurance. He counted the cost. He did not under-estimate the reality of the sacrifice which would crush Him to the earth in Gethsemane, and wring from Him the awful Fourth Word on the Cross. But He knew that sacrifice was the way to victory, and so for Him the inevitable way.

We, too, have to learn the first lesson of sacrifice and count the cost. Hardly anything could be more fatal,—more pitiable,—than for us to under-estimate the tremendous sacrifice going up from the world to-day.)

Our peril is not the danger of getting morbid and unnerved about it, but the danger of sheer, dull, bovine, inability to realise the immense horror of it, partly because of its very immensity, and partly

through our lack of imagination. Surely for those who look out on life with the eyes of our Master, the sorrows of the world to-day can never be far away from their hearts and their intercessions. Think what it must mean to Him—this shattering desecration of His fair world, this maiming of the finest manhood upon earth. We want to-day, with a very keen and sensitive understanding, to try to count the cost.

Only so can we begin to bear our share in the great sacrifice which streams to Heaven, to stretch out strong hands of prayer over the ever-widening field,—on earth and in Paradise. We shall never understand the glory of the offering till we try to estimate the cost.

In a strong, sad little poem published this week, called "The Price," a shadowy figure called "Loss" grieves by the crosses on the battlefield; and "Loss" says:

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"I am a thousand songs unsung,
A thousand, thousand roads unmade;
Legion my name: I am the young,
The swift, the strong, the unafraid.

"I am a myriad precious things
That perished ere they came to birth,
And I all fair imaginings
That shall not now make glad the earth.

"Hear you my voice?—a dreamlike cry
That beats from far and dies forlorn?
I am lost love, and I, oh! I,
The children never to be born."

Do you think the nation at home
realises even yet the price that is being
paid out there?

It is not perhaps fair to judge the
attitude of the nation as a whole from
those unspeakably humiliating labour
disputes, though it makes one hot all
over to think how such disputes must
sound out there, or to imagine what the
attitude of some of our well-fed, well-paid
British mechanics must look like to our
Allies in the Field.

Nor is it fair to judge the outlook of the whole country from the amazing decisions to persevere with race-meetings and professional football at such a time, though what France and Russia and Belgium think of such decisions it is wiser not to ask.

But it is true that, in spite of the splendour of the numberless individual acts of sacrifice and whole-hearted offering, you cannot go far to-day without every now and then being caught up wondering,—and wondering yet again—whether the nation as a whole has yet counted the cost.

The *first* challenge of the War's Sacrifice is a challenge to *count the cost*,—and, while counting it, steadfastly to set the face to go forward and bear it. For most of us the cost may not be in our own person a heroic one,—(though there cannot be many of us who have not much at stake out there in the persons of those we love). But it may

be for many of us that the spirit in which we pay our taxes next year,—and the way in which we refrain from grumbling about them, and making those taxes an excuse to cut down our almsgiving,—will be the real test of whether *to us* the heroism of Belgium was worth while. And certainly our quiet self-discipline, our unstinted generosity, our uncomplaining self-repression, our untiring sympathy, our unfailing prayers, are the certain proofs,—whether *to us* the great offering of tears and blood to-day is a reasonable sacrifice in which we claim to bear our part.

And then, as we stand beside the Lord Christ, trembling may be to count the cost, but facing with Him the splendour and the pain, there creeps over us like a strong tide of new life the clear knowledge of the truth—that sacrifice is the sure way of victory. Come and listen to Him on the closing day of His public Ministry,—the Tuesday before that awful Friday,—and hear His

last words to the world outside the inner circle of His friends. Just as in the first days at Bethlehem the ancient East had paid its homage, and the Gentile world, in the persons of the wise men, had claimed the Son of David for its King: so now at the end, the young mysterious West approaches Him in the persons of those Greeks who came up to the Feast and said to Philip, "Sir, we would see JESUS." To them He turns, with all that lies before Him in His Heart, and explains the triumphant secret of sacrifice.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

That is the wonderful paradox of the Kingdom of GOD. "On a thousand hills the glorious harvest may tremble in the golden sunlight,—but the corn of wheat

must fall into the ground, and as it falls, die, and burst its envelope, and so spring again into manifold life." And then, turning from the analogy of Nature and speaking more clearly of Himself, the Lord utters what are perhaps the strongest words ever uttered by human lips: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Think of the splendid courage of those words, spoken in such an hour, and the supreme confidence of them. The courage and the confidence which could see beyond the sacrifice to the great results,—or rather could see in the actual sacrifice itself the lifting up which should be for evermore the great magnet to draw the hearts of men.

We know how splendidly true those words have been. Still, after nearly twice a thousand years, that lifting up on Calvary is the strongest drawing power in all the world. Nothing in the world to-day compares with the attraction,—the drawing power,—of the sacrifice of JESUS Christ.

And we, too, have to learn the lesson of the Greeks.

As with the world's greatest sacrifice, so with the lesser sacrifices of the sons of men,—that lifting up of self in supreme offering, that losing of the life in this world,—is still the great drawing power which rivets the soul of a nation to its best self, which draws the whole world upwards towards GOD. Are we not beginning to find it so already in the experiences of to-day? Would Belgium in a thousand years of quiet prosperity have ever reached the attractive leadership, the *drawing power* of her high imperishable glory, which her supreme sacrifice has given her in seven months of martyrdom?

Do we not know already in ourselves that in the sacrifices our own nation has made, and is making, we recognise the nation's true and imperishable self,—that those young lives so freely given, and those brave hearts who have let them go, are our real leaders who are drawing us

on by the power of their sacrifice towards a new and mightier England, with a new self-respect, a new solemnity of purpose, a new belief in itself and in GOD? A nation re-born out of a great travail, the harvest of the seeds which have fallen to the ground and died?

Surely we can never again quite lose the vision of the triumph of sacrifice. In war and in peace it is the secret of success, the way of victory. For there lies upon all true sacrifice the mark of the Cross, and the light of the Face of Him Who died upon it. He hails as His own true friends all who bear that mark which He has made His own. Whether that mark flashes upon the soul in the sudden call of a death on the field of honour, or is wrought out painfully and slowly in a long life of patient offering at home, the Cross is the victor's mark of consecration,—the seal of GOD in the foreheads of those, who, in the fellowship of suffering, have endured and overcome.

VII.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

III. SUFFERING

Also

Preached in ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, 27th June,
1915.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

III. SUFFERING

ST. LUKE XXIII. 33.—

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”

A WEEK ago we listened to the Challenge of Sacrifice,—the challenge to “count the cost.” To-night we face together something of the cost itself,—“SUFFERING.”

We are following step by step the voices of the war, and we find it to be true,—do we not?—that just as the great

stark facts which face us become plainer each step we take, so the mystery which overshadows, or rather over-shines them, grows ever deeper, and harder to interpret.

The challenge of Honour flung out to the soul of a great people only wanted to be realised as a great fact for its mystery to clear. It was just the fact that honour was at stake which needed grasping; and when once that challenge was accepted, the only mystery remaining was the elementary mystery of man's divine instinct which chooses to lose the whole world rather than lose his soul.

The challenge of Duty followed necessarily on that of honour; the fact of duty became plainer as honour's call was understood,—though the mystery of where highest duty lay was not always clear, and the grace which inspired the response to duty in the hearts of men was hid with Christ in GOD.

The challenge of Sacrifice grows clearer every day as honour and duty

grip the soul of man, but its mystery is harder to read than either. Its shadow and its splendour fall like a luminous mist across the world, streaming heavenwards,—a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire, according to our faith and power of vision,—but mysterious always, even when the veil is thin, and we can see the glorious purpose behind the offering,—the triumph shining through the pain.

The challenge of Suffering is a challenge to face a starker fact even than that of sacrifice,—and an even harder mystery. It is one of the plainest facts as well as one of the ever-present mysteries of human life,—only surpassed by death, the sternest fact and the deepest mystery of all. We shrink from facing it, but face it surely we must,—this dread fact of suffering, this great unread mystery of pain. We were not created for suffering, always remember that, we were created for happiness: that is why suffering impresses us so much. We know it is not

the normal thing. We remember a wakeful night of pain with awe, while taking countless nights of refreshing, dreamless peace for granted, because of the deep conviction in man's heart that he was made for happiness,—that it is his proper state,—and that pain is an experience and not a destiny: and so, in the long hours of the darkest night of sorrow, there lies deep down the unconquerable confidence, that some how and some when, "joy cometh in the morning."

But although it is not our normal state, suffering, either mental or bodily, is the experience some time of every one of us. Pain is something in life we have to face,—for ourselves and for others. We shrink as a rule, and quite naturally, from facing it until the time comes, and considering how little we think about suffering "in all time of our wealth," it is wonderful how well people bear it when it comes to them. But we cannot, even if we would, shut our ears to the

challenge of suffering to-day. The whole world is shadowed by it. We cannot think in millions. We cannot distinguish much that is articulate in the ocean of human misery which engulfs Europe to-day. It is all just one great throb of anguish to us, a fiery holocaust of suffering, the great tribulation of a multitude which no man can number, choking up in dust and flame before the Feet of GOD. Only now and then do we begin to understand in our simple, unimaginative way a little fringe of what it means. A telegram is handed in at the house opposite, and the blinds are drawn down, and we falter out our sympathy as best we can to the mother whose boy has died of wounds; or we meet a trainload of men maimed and shattered from the trenches, blinded perhaps or mad, and we try to think what one-hundred-thousand of such trains must mean. Or we take up an official pamphlet which tells of atrocities on women and children, the

torture of old men and helpless prisoners, before which the savage brutality of the Redskin and the Boxer grow pale. At such times as these, we seem for a moment to feel the hot breath of the burning fiery furnace which beats its flame to Heaven,—something of the facts comes home to us,—and we stand appalled and stunned before the awful mystery of human suffering.

The Challenge of the War,—that is what we are trying to meet. But that is not the full title of the problem we have set ourselves to face. And to-night we must remember, and cling to the fact, that we are facing the challenge of the war to the *Christian* soul; and, frankly, if this challenge of suffering did not come to us as Christians, I do not think we could really meet it at all. The voices of honour, of duty, and of sacrifice may all be heard and answered, and have indeed *been* heard and answered, outside the light of the Christian faith,—but to

the challenge of suffering, the world,—apart from Christ,—can find no answer. As with death, so with suffering. The Christian alone has any clue to the mystery, or any hope of finding the true answer. If it were not for the Incarnation, the Passion and the Cross, the mystery of suffering would be unapproachable, unintelligible, hopeless. Its brooding shadow would crush and madden us: under its weight the world's faith would stagger and die. We should not know, we could not believe, that GOD is Love.

I do not mean that the world is not able, from the calm view-point of later history, to admire and take note of the effect of suffering. It is the common heritage of the world's experience that a nation, taken as a whole, is deepened and purified by suffering; and Shelley is surely right when he sings,

“Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.”

No doubt, in a hundred years' time, historians will record with wonder the virile growth and splendour of a new Europe born from the pangs of the Great War, and will bless the very acuteness of the horrors of 1915 for a wholly new conception of the brotherhood of man.

The world, too, is quite able to understand and recognise the graces which flow from pain, and the fact that some of the most precious things in human nature,—sympathy and self-control, and fortitude and fearless heroism,—could not exist without it.

But,—for the fiery trial itself, for the men and women who endure, for the fierce agony of the battlefield, for the cold horror of bereavement, for the facing of suffering in one's own person, or in the persons of those we love, for the facing of the world's unimaginable sorrows without losing one's reason or one's faith,—the Cross is all in all. The mystery is still there, but the mystery is approachable.

We have something to hold on to: something to steady us: something to lift us up out of ourselves, and at the same time to make us bearable to ourselves,—
GOD the Sufferer, GOD the Crucified.

“We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was *for us*
He hung and suffered there.”

For us—not only for our forgiveness,
but for our *sufferings*.

“And in the garden secretly, and on the Cross
on high,
To teach His brethren and inspire to suffer
and to die.”

And not only to teach and inspire us
how,—but to suffer *with* us, and to *let*
us suffer with Him.

That was why the Christian Church
seized the sorrows of the world to its
bosom and gloried in them and made
them its own. That was why it went to

the poor and the outcast, and the sick; that is why you can trace the progress of Christianity across Europe by the hospitals it set up; that is why we tend our wounded under the badge of the Red Cross. The Cross lay at the heart of human suffering. Human suffering was stamped on the Heart of GOD. And the splendid fact and the glorious mystery still is this,—that He Who still bears in Heaven the marks of His Passion, Who learned obedience by the things that He suffered, Who for us endured the Cross, allows us to suffer *with* Him and *for* Him now.

Hard as it is to understand, mysterious as it is to think, our human sufferings may be accepted, endured *for* Him. The bearing of the Cross,—in the way He would have us bear it,—is still the mark of His friend and His disciple, is still claimed by Him as an offering of love, and that offering He asks of us *here* and *here* only :

"If impatient, thou let slip thy Cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again
Nor in another; here, and here alone
Is given thee to *suffer* for GOD'S sake.
In other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve Him and love Him, praise Him and
work for Him,
Grow nearer and nearer Him with all delight;
But then we shall not any more be called
To *suffer*, which is our appointment here.
Canst thou not suffer then, one hour or two?
And, while we suffer, let us set our souls
To suffer perfectly; since this alone,
The suffering, which is this world's special
grace,
May here be perfected, and left behind."



VIII.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

IV. VICTORY

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WAR

IV. VICTORY

REVELATION II. 8, 10, 11.—

“And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. . . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

THE voices of the War have led us on to Passiontide. One by one we have tried to face them, and learn something of their challenge and their appeal. And one remains which dominates them all,—“VICTORY.”

That is the crown of Honour and of Duty: the fruit of Sacrifice and of

Suffering: the sequel of Death: Victory. That is the goal to which all lead, the star to which our eyes are set,—the sure outcome from which our faith must never waver or our prayers be allowed to fail. And it is well that the challenge of Victory should come to us on the Eve of Holy Week. Once more the Cross draws us within its shadow and its glory, and as we go to it for the true meaning of the other voices of the War, so there we find the true conditions of the last. The Cross *is* Victory. Honour and Duty lead us there. Sacrifice and Suffering and Death meet there, and, meeting there, are swallowed up in Victory.

And just as the way of the Cross is the way of all spiritual triumph, so it is the way of all earthly victory. The conditions are the same,—endurance to the end, faithfulness unto death.

In the great days of the beginning when the Church set out to conquer the world, this certainty of Victory was the

greatest of all facts. The great Triumph was so recent, the glory had so lately faded into Heaven, that the men and women of those days carried with them into every phase of life the fire of this great conviction,—this happy certainty,—that service and sacrifice, loyal endurance, even unto death, were the secrets of life's success. The Triumph of the Cross was for them not only the central fact of man's religious experience, it was also the guiding principle of the common life of every day.

And so we find St. John,—in his lonely exile, with the world against him, and life running out, and evil to all appearances triumphant over good,—seeing his sure visions, and writing his messages of calm assurance to the persecuted Churches of Asia Minor.

For each one there is its own message and its own warning, for each one the same certainty of "overcoming," whether the message is one of praise, or fame, or

solemn exhortation. Each one concludes with a promise, "to him that overcometh."

Whether it be the hidden manna, the new name, the tree of life, the morning star, the white raiment, the sitting on the throne, or freedom from the second death, —the reward of Victory is certain for "him that overcometh."

And the city for which the disciple whom JESUS loved has nothing but praise, the one who is exhorted to remain faithful unto death, is the city of Smyrna, the doorway then, as it is to-day, to the Continent of Asia.

It is curious to think in the crisis of to-day that the crews of our British battleships in the eastern Mediterranean can sweep with their glasses and their guns the ancient city of the East to which St. John wrote the most approving of all his letters in the Book of his Revelation.

Smyrna can look back to a proved history of more than a thousand years

before St. John was born. One of the most ancient of the Greek Colonies, and later the most loyal of all the Roman allies, Smyrna became the home of one of the most faithful and most persecuted of all the branches of the infant Christian Church. To them St. John is writing his message of encouragement and of hope. And he illustrates the permanent triumph of their loyal endurance from the story of the city itself. The continuity of life through death had been seen in Smyrna's earlier history when the ancient city had been destroyed by the Lydians and remained obliterated from the roll of Greek cities for four hundred years. But all the time it had lived on as a village state, and then rose again in greater magnificence than before. To all who approached the city, the chief object in those days, as it is to-day, was the famous "Crown of Smyrna" of which all Smyrna was so justly proud. That ancient crown of towers which surmounts the hill above

the city had been before their eyes from childhood. The promise is now that a new crown shall be given to Smyrna.

She shall wear no longer a mere crown of towers, but a *crown of life*. The faithfulness to death of that little despised, persecuted Church of Smyrna should crown the city with a new glory, a promise which came true a few years later when the martyrdom there of St. John's own pupil, St. Polycarp, enrolled the Bishop of Smyrna among the saints of the Christian Church. Smyrna remained a Christian stronghold for nearly one thousand four hundred years till Tamerlane took it in 1402. Since then, Smyrna has been a Turkish town, its life overshadowed, its name obliterated from the roll of Christian cities; it awaits to-day its final emancipation. But it is a curious fact that the Christian element has always been so strong there, that the Turks call the city "Infidel Smyrna,"—and even to-day the Christians in Smyrna outnumber the

Moslems in the proportion of three to one.

Such then was the destiny foreseen by the seer for the faithful Church in Smyrna. "He foresaw permanence, stability, reality, surpassing the outward appearance, life maintaining itself strong and unmoved amid trial and apparent death."¹ And this triumph is the reward of the faithfulness to death, "of him that overcometh."

I want to draw your special attention to the original Greek of that expression, "he that overcometh," which occurs in all the seven letters to the Churches of Asia.

It is a participle in the *present* tense and really means "he that is *overcoming*." It is a *present* process, that "overcoming," a continual experience from day to day, not simply the supreme moment of final triumph.

Victory awaits him that "is overcoming" day after day, hour after hour,—in a fight for life. Victory is starting

1 Sir William Ramsay.

now. The final victory is decided by the victory of every hour. This was true in the earthly life of JESUS Christ. He was "overcoming" when He went down to Nazareth and was subject to His Mother and St. Joseph; when He faced the Tempter alone in the wilderness; when He met the remonstrance of St. John Baptist about His Baptism, and of St. Peter about His Passion; when He refused to allow the people to take Him by force and make Him a king; when virtue went out of Him to heal, and the demons fled at His Word; when scribe and Pharisee and money-changer quailed before His holy anger; when He flung Himself in an agony of self-surrender on the Father's Will in Gethsemane. It was a perpetual process of "overcoming," one long victory which culminated in the cry of "It is finished" from the Cross.

It is true, too, in the life of the child of GOD to-day. The victory is one long process of perpetual "overcoming."

It is not often given to Christian men and women to-day to crown life with visible triumphant victory over the powers of evil,—to fight with beasts at Ephesus, or be burnt in the market place of Smyrna. But those who pass to-day to the reward of the “faithful unto death,” and to sing the distant triumph song, are those who are “overcoming” little by little, day by day, in a long (sometimes quite prosaic) test of endurance. It may be just the refusal to read a suggestive book, to close the eyes to an evil picture, to check the tongue again and again on the brink of saying the hasty or spiteful thing, to force a smile instead of a frown when people around you are more than usually stupid, or thoughtless, or cruel. It may be just the sticking quietly to some resolution about prayer, or communion, or almsgiving, or punctuality, or self-denial. It may be a plucky rebuke of vice, a patient enduring of hardness, or the breaking with a dangerous friend,

which will be one of those definite "overcomings" on which the final victory depends. We have just the same materials as the men of old for becoming saints. The little things of every day *well done* for the love of GOD,—these are the pledge of the crown reserved for the faithful.

And so it surely is, too, in the great struggle on which all our eyes are fixed, and from which we are trying to learn our lessons. The victory for which we pray will be the culmination of individual acts of "overcoming" all through the long campaign.

The labour of an unknown minesweeper off the Goodwins may mean the saving of a mighty super-dreadnought which will turn the tide of some historic fight; the taking of a trench at Neuve Chapelle will have a definite bearing on a victorious march to the Rhine. The courage of one subaltern in Flanders, or one stoker in the Dardanelles, or one aviator in the Vosges, or the quick, earnest prayer of

an English school-boy as he hears the war-bell go at noon—all go to make the ultimate triumph sure.

And if the victory is to be a real victory, a *moral* triumph for the nation and not merely a glorious feat of arms, it will be the result of the victorious process of “overcoming” going on quietly in the nation now at home. The steady facing of the great lessons, the prizing more and more of that word Honour which is being redeemed at such a cost, the sober diligence in daily duty, the calm self-sacrifice and tender sympathy, the bold demand for a higher standard than ever before in temperance, soberness and chastity, the brave facing of suffering, separation, silence and death. All these things,—the daily offerings and quiet “overcomings” of just ordinary men and women,—go to ensure the real victory of a nation that has come through the great tribulation and the robe-washing. Like Smyrna, England is offered a new crown,

the Crown of Life: that is her permanent reward that shall endure: the crown of those who overcome,—who find that faithfulness to death is entry into new and glorious life.



IX.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

Preached in ST. GEORGE'S, RAMSGATE,
Patronal Festival, 1915.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

PSALM XCI. 13.—

*“The dragon shalt thou trample
under feet.”*

THE day of a Church's Patron Saint is at any time a challenge to one's patriotism and one's pride. It bids us remember and rejoice in the name by which our Church is called. It is an appeal to our comradeship with one another under the banner of our own particular saint in the army of the living GOD. Such an appeal at any time wakes a response in any Christian congregation. But to us here the Patronal Festival comes with a force and meaning, which

such a day can not, as a rule, have for other men. For our saint is the Saint of England,—the Christian champion which our land has taken for its own protector and its inspiration. The true Knight of Chivalry, whose name is honoured east and west in Christendom as the Happy Warrior, without fear and without reproach.

We share St. George with all whose hearts beat loyal to England and the English flag. And so our pride is merged in a deeper patriotism than even our own high traditions in this Church awaken. Our comradeship opens out into a world-wide brotherhood of race and fealty.

And St. George's Day this year stands out with a challenge and an appeal the like of which England has never heard before. Never since the vision of St. George flashed before Richard Cœur de Lion on the eve of the Crusades, or the Third Edward instituted in his honour the proudest Order of Knighthood since

the days of Arthur's table round,—has the 23rd of April dawned on such an England as it has seen to-day. The flag of St. George floating proudly from the Church-towers of England to-day has floated over a land in arms, while for the honour of the flag which bears as its central symbol the St. George's Cross, the mightiest army England has ever raised is agonising over-seas, and the mightiest fleet the world has ever known keeps ceaseless vigil.

Just when we need it most the great reminder comes. In days when the strain is beginning to tell, when hearts are heavy with the sense of loss, when the immensity of the cost is coming home to us, and the call for even greater sacrifice is sounded with stern and desperate necessity from day to day,—the challenge of St. George flings us back upon our splendid past, as it nerves us to face and shoulder our mighty duty in the present.

It is the appeal to the spirit of England which sounds for us to-day, the call of that strange, indefinable sense of country, which lies at the heart of a nation's being,—dormant and over-laid in times of selfish ease, but stirred to life in days of peril when dragons are abroad. How shall we describe it,—that strange call, the endowment of a thousand years,—which stirs the blood of all that is best, old and young, in English life to-day? That call to understand what England stands for, that call to visualise the splendid pageant of our history, and know it as something alive and puissant to-day,—just because England is England still?

Henry Newbolt has caught something of it in his vision of that king of England who “ever rides abroad through London town”:

“Unarmed he rode, but in his ruddy shield
 The lions bore the dint of many a lance,
 And up and down his mantle's azure field
 Were strewn the lilies plucked in famous
 France.

Before him went, with banner floating wide,
 The yeomen tried that served his honour best,
 And, mixed with these, his knights of noble
 blood.

But, in the place of pride,
 His admirals in billowy lines abreast
 Convoyed him close like galleons on the flood."

Knight and noble, yeoman and sailor
 to-day are falling in behind that splendid
 train.

And we, too, lift our heads with
 humble pride as we press after them.
 The youngest feels the glamour of it,
 and the oldest find their hearts grow
 young to know that they have lived to
 see the day which seals the splendour of
 their goodly heritage:

"With failing feet and shoulders bowed
 Beneath the weight of happier days,
 He lagged among the heedless crowd,
 Or crept along suburban ways.
 But still through all his heart was young,
 His mood a joy that nought could mar,
 A courage, a pride, a rapture, sprung
 Of the strength and splendour of England's
 war."

In the gracious legends which cluster round the name of the young soldier-saint who claims our devotion to-day, the monster whom he fought and slew polluted and defiled the earth with its poisonous breath and noisome slime, slaughtering all who came its way, demanding its daily toll of women's and children's lives,—repulsive, terrible and strong.

No dragon of ancient myth was a tithe so terrible as the one which the children of St. George are bidden to gird themselves to fight to-day.

It is vital for the life of civilisation,—and of European Christianity itself,—that that blood-stained monster, that ruthless spirit of barbarous militarism, should be crushed and slain for ever. “And we, shall we be faithless? Shall hearts fail, hands hang down?” The monster is stronger than we thought. Its vitality is hydra-headed in its power of recovery and resistance. But for the glory of the

past, for the sternness of the present, for the immensity of the future,—we must not, we dare not, faint or fail.

We have yet to put forth every effort to the uttermost, as a nation, and as individuals,—of men and money and munitions, of self-discipline and sacrifice, and unceasing, unfaltering intercession. And as we gird ourselves to try, the assurance of our Patron Saint rings out to us:

“The dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”

“We, too, with Heaven’s armies, we with St.
George this day,
Would seek and smite the dragon, nor falter
in the fray,
Till heart and hearth and nation acclaim with
one accord
St. George, St. George for England, and Eng-
land for the Lord!”

X.

PRAYER

Rogation-tide, 1915.

PRAYER

ROMANS VI. 11.—

“Through JESUS Christ our Lord.”

GOD is teaching us many things these terrible days. Lessons which have taken other men a lifetime in happier times to learn, are being ground into us in a few months in the grim and desperate school of war.

The world in its agony is being flung back upon the first elementary principles of its faith.

Gone,—like a cloud of chattering sparrows under the hovering shadow of a hawk,—are the airy speculations and theories and strange theologies of a year ago, and men are striving in the darkness

to feel the rock firm under their feet,—the rock of the old, old faith on which the martyrs stood, on which the Church of GOD is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. The belief that GOD is Justice, that God is Truth, that GOD is Love,—all these are put to a sharp test to-day. The belief that our Lord has redeemed the world, that He rules in the kingdoms of men, that He holds the keys of death, and none pass that gate without Him, that righteousness and not evil must prevail on earth,—that old, primitive, fundamental faith is strained and tested, and coming to the proof in the experiences of countless lives in almost every nation under Heaven at this hour.

Is our faith strong enough to stand that test? I think it is. And it stands it partly because men and women are learning now that nothing but that faith can keep them sane in the face of the appalling convulsions of to-day. If the

truth of the faith for which we stand is necessary at all times for the world's happiness, it is necessary to-day for the world's *sanity*. In that faith alone can men face the pain, and the misery, and the bereavement, and the anxiety, and the cruelty, which overshadow these fair spring days.

How could we bear those casualty lists if it were not for Good Friday and Easter Day? What keeps us going during the darker days, and gives us patience in reverses, but the certain knowledge that GOD rules this earth of ours, and therefore a righteous cause is, and must be, the winning cause.

You stand aghast may be, at the bestial story of the poison-gas at Ypres, or you cry aloud in helpless anger at the murderous ferocity of the massacre in the Luisitania, and you may be tempted to ask, as American papers have been asking the last few days, "Can it really be that evil is to triumph over good?" And

then the old faith returns to help and balance you. And you know that just because there is a GOD in Heaven Who is Judge of all the earth, the cause of a nation guilty of such deeds is already a lost cause: that, come what may, "the Lord shall destroy both the blood-thirsty and deceitful man": that for His Own Honour—in the face of murder, lust, and falsehood—the Lord, as of old, shall once again make bare His Holy Arm in the sight of all the nations. And in that faith you can commit your cause to that Righteous Judge Who is still strong and patient, though His wrath is provoked every day.

And of all that we are learning now, nothing perhaps stands out so clearly as our new sense of the power and the necessity of PRAYER,—not that most of us have done more than just begin to learn to pray; but however badly we do it, we are learning more and more its necessity and its efficacy.

“No help but prayer:
The breath that goes beyond this iron world
And touches Him that made it.”

And this Sunday, coming just at a moment when we need its help so badly, is the Sunday of Prayer. To-day we enter upon Rogationtide,—that solemn time of asking which ushers in the Feast of the Ascension.

Why now especially? we ask. Why this particular emphasis on prayer on the few days immediately before Ascension Day? Prayer has well been called “An ascent of the mind to GOD.” And that ascension of the mind to GOD can only be made, as we acknowledge at the end of all our prayers, “through JESUS Christ our Lord.” That is the holy formula in which all prayer is offered: the consecration that is uttered (or understood) in every petition we make: that sounds through all worship, in all Churches, in all ages: “through JESUS Christ our Lord.” And that formula is for all prayer the

Gate of Heaven. And it is the Ascension Day which gives us the confidence and the right to utter it.

You noticed, of course, that the Church threw herself back during those great days after Easter upon the farewell words of our Lord on the night before His Passion, and she took as her Gospels for the third, fourth and fifth weeks after Easter the same words that were read in the lessons in Holy Week. Neither the first disciples nor we could grasp the real significance of that final discourse, as the storms of Maundy Thursday night and Good Friday sweep down upon and crush the Great Speaker and His hearers even as the words are uttered, and the first glorious surprise of Easter drives them out of remembrance. But afterwards, in the quiet time of waiting for the day of parting, the words came back again. Again and again, in those wonderful chapters of St. John, xiv.—xvi., there come the instructions for that day of parting.

And to-day the final words, read from the Altar this morning, take us back to those with which He began: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in My Name* He will give it you." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." They are a repetition of His opening invitation in the fourteenth chapter: "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it."

Ask—"in My Name." It is a new power of prayer, a new avenue of intercourse with GOD that has opened up to us. "In that day,"—the day of parting, the day of withdrawal, the day of Ascension,—what those who love Him are to have as their new privilege, their new endowment, their new Conception of Prayer—is the asking "in His Name." And so, from Ascension Day onwards, the Christian wings his prayer into the Presence-chamber of GOD "through JESUS Christ our Lord." It means that we are

claiming for our prayers the merits of our Lord Himself: it means that we are ascending with our Lord into union with the Mind of GOD.

Do we know what we are doing when we try to set in motion a power that ascends to the presence of GOD?

Think of that Presence and that Place to which our petitions pass, and in which they must be presented. There is the Place where the destiny of the world is being worked out. There is the Presence before Whom have passed the great empires of the world's history. There is the Council Chamber in which all the business of this active scene is being carried out, and those ordered motions regulated and controlled, which we call the Laws of the Universe. There is being organised and equipped the never-ceasing campaign of the Church against the sin and disorder of the world: there are being administered with minute care the tiniest details of the different lives of

men: there are pouring in in a never-ending stream the impassioned cries for pardon, the plaintive wail of pain, the solemn prayer of the saint, the tender voice of the little child, "through JESUS Christ our Lord."

How that should steady our wayward utterance and wandering desire! And yet, what an up-lift and an inspiration to try really to pray! To think that there the riches of GOD are stored up in infinite profusion,—for the world, for the Church and for our own souls, and that we men are set to help to regulate their distribution! That we must ask for them to be distributed in all their fulness, and that by prayer we may and do contribute to the working out of the details of the world's life! How absolutely limitless is the power we might use if only we were really men of prayer: men who ascend to share the Mind of GOD.

Are we using that power to-day as we ought to do, we who remain at

home? Is the accusation true that the wave of solemn devotion which swept over England in August has largely died away as the war has dragged on? Then in GOD'S Name let us get to our knees again and stay there. A short time ago you blushed with shame,—and rightly so,—that men could be found in these Islands, who, for their own selfish ends, would deliberately hold up the munitions of war from our glorious soldiers at the Front. No words could be found to express our detestation of such callous, criminal selfishness and treachery.

But are we, who as Christians know the power and possibilities of prayer, really making use of the weapon in our hands? Are we true patriots in this matter,—wrestling night and day to uphold with the might of our intercession the men who are bearing for us and ours that almost intolerable strain? Think what a field is open to us, a field that is widening day by day, in this world

and the next. Those of you who get letters from the trenches know how our prayers for the men we love out there have been, are being, literally answered a hundred times a day: you know, too, how simply and frankly they rely on us to pray for them. That, at any rate, is the one thing we can do for them and for our country at this time. Who can tell how effectively the prayers of one faithful man, or woman, or child at home, in the Name of JESUS Christ, can shield and strengthen those we pray for in their hour of trial? The shell that bursts at the feet of a man and destroys nothing but his pipe; the bullet that ricochets for no apparent reason in the other direction; the hand grenade that falls a few feet wide; the shrapnel bullet which lodges in a cap,—how many of those close escapes are due to prayers at home, only GOD and the angels know.

Sometimes, perhaps, the prayers have not been answered in the way our hearts

desired. They have seemed to fail, and the dreaded news we fought against with all our strength of human will and human love has come. But even then, in that dark hour, we know that our prayers are safe, and though we go on our way weeping, we shall come again with joy and bring our sheaves with us: for those prayers have been offered through JESUS Christ our Lord.

And then think again how wide we can fling the embrace of our intercession if we choose,—the wounded streaming to our hospitals, the sufferers choking in the deadly gas-fumes, the sailors with their set lips and straining eyes, the prisoners trying to believe that all will still be well, the mothers at home opening those awful telegrams, the friends who have scanned in vain this week those lists of survivors, the starving Belgians, our soldiers training at home and all the temptations that beset them, the great and faithful Allies who fight beside us in their millions,

our own far-flung battle-lines from the Shetlands to South Africa, from Flanders to the Persian Gulf. Boundless, even on earth, is the field for our intercession. And what of the land beyond, the land into which those young lives go striding out in their thousands week by week? Who would dare to deny to them the prayers of the Great Body to which they still belong? To pray for those who have passed into that larger life is a human instinct of love too deeply rooted to be shaken or suppressed by any shivering reaction from the extravagances of a foreign church, and I for one am certain that England cannot be denied that instinct now. If to them our prayers were nothing more than a caress of love, who would dare to withhold from them that devotion?

Set no limits then to the scope or the horizon of your prayers. Like our Lord, we must go up into a mountain to pray. Widen your vision, stir your imagination, open your hearts.

Our prayer may expect a limitless return, if by our care and reverence and persevering devotion it has been united to the intercession of our Ascended Lord Himself. We can go back to our prayers with renewed hope and expectation if, through Him, we may bring into the very Court of Heaven that which will bear the impress and be worthy of the consecration of the name of "JESUS Christ."



XI.

THANKSGIVING

Preached in ST. GEORGE'S, RAMSGATE, on
May 19th, 1915, at the Service of Solemn
Thanksgiving for the Preservation of the Borough
and Population during the Air Raid of May 17th.

THANKSGIVING

ECCLESIASTICUS LI. 9, 10.—

“Then lifted I up my supplication from the earth, and prayed for deliverance from death. I called upon the Lord, the Father of my Lord, that He would not leave me in the days of my trouble, and in the time of the proud, when there was none to help. I will praise Thy Name continually, and will sing praise with thanksgiving; and so my prayer was heard: For Thou savedst me from destruction, and deliveredst me from the evil time: therefore will I give thanks, and praise Thee, and bless Thy Name O Lord.”

THE motive of our service to-night is a very simple one.

We are here with all the solemn simplicity of children to render thanks to our Father which is in Heaven, for deliverance from death. I am certain that the decision to hold this service has met the instinctive desire of the whole town. Beneath all the calm *sang froid*, with which I am proud to say all our people have faced this experience, there lies deep down a sincere and reverent thankfulness to GOD for a merciful deliverance and a marvellous escape. And in this solemn Service of Thanksgiving we are trying to express that sense of gratitude. "Thou savedst me from destruction, and deliveredst me from the evil time: therefore will I give thanks, and praise Thee, and bless Thy Name O Lord."

Surely no experience could give us a more vivid sense of the over-shadowing Love of GOD than the one which came

to us in the early hours of last Monday morning. When you think of the helpless, sleeping town, with its narrow streets, its comparatively small area, and its thirty thousand souls, and overhead, one, or perhaps two, of those gigantic machines of death, hovering to and fro, and hurling from the sky with murderous indiscriminate fire and high explosive, and how only one of those deadly missiles found a fatal mark,—you realise that the days of miracle are not yet over, and that prayer is answered every day.

I confess to a certain feeling of exasperation when I see a visitation of this kind treated with levity or contempt on account of its failure to achieve its end (though that attitude no doubt conceals a deeper feeling which English folk are anxious to conceal). But to-night, and in this place, we allow ourselves to be quite candid and to face the true facts. The danger was real and tremendous. We were mercifully spared. It was no

question of good luck, or good fortune,—it was the good Hand of our GOD upon us. It was of His Mercy that we were not consumed.

And surely it is not possible for us to go through an experience like this, and ever be quite the same again. We shall indeed be deaf and blind if we are not learning some solemn lessons to-day.

Two things, I am sure, stand out, and call us with insistent voice in this hour of deliverance. A summons to a closer grasp of our entire and absolute dependence upon GOD, and a challenge to realise the tremendous and awful gravity of the war. Let the thunder of those explosions over your homes and your women folk and your children, wake echoes in your hearts of the most solemn and sacred determination to play the man to the very uttermost in this fight of life and death. Be ready to sacrifice yourself in any and every way: first, to make the land we love secure from

violation, and then to cleanse the world from the awful pollution which stains and strangles it to-day. Let that deep note of a new vision of GOD and your own duty run through your thanksgivings to-night.

And so, for this new proof of His power and love towards us; for His summons to finer duty and sterner sacrifice; for His infinite mercy in the past, and our sure and certain hope in Him for whatever lies ahead; "Let us give thanks unto our Lord GOD: It is meet and right so to do."



XII.

THE LORD, AND GIVER OF LIFE

Preached in ST. GEORGE'S, RAMSGATE, on
Whit-Sunday, 1915.

THE LORD, AND GIVER OF LIFE

EZEKIEL XXXVII. 9, 10.—

“Then said He unto me, ‘Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

WE stand on sacred ground on Whit-Sunday. For to-day the veil grows very thin between the life of GOD, and the life of man whom He has made. You must often have noticed how the Book of the Psalms is always a faithful mirror of man’s deepest experiences of GOD.

No one, for instance, who was here in this Church last Wednesday night, and felt the calm, triumphant strength and confidence of that ninety-first Psalm, as it rose slowly through the crowded building on those sixteen hundred voices,—could have failed to realise how the words which told the secret of the safety from the “terror by night,” and of protection from the “pestilence that walketh in darkness,” might have been written for us three days,—and not three thousand years ago.

The Psalms never fail us in our great moments, whether we go to them for help in our own experiences of human joy or pain, or let them speak to us in great deep organ notes of the eternal mysteries of GOD. And two of those deep organ notes sound in the Psalms to describe or hint at the way in which, with all His majestic mystery, GOD offers Himself to the knowledge of man. They are in complete and dramatic contrast to

one another. One is the mystery of darkness. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." "He made darkness His secret place, and thick clouds to cover Him." The other is the mystery of light. As we shall sing to-night in the special evening Psalm for Whit-Sunday: "Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment." Darkness and light! The two opposites which divide the world, and yet both are made the medium of the utterance of GOD. "Darkness is round about Him," and yet He stands before the world, clothed with light "as with a garment."

"To the pagan, GOD is mysterious, because He is hidden in clouds, mysterious like the storm: to the Christian, GOD is mysterious, because He is radiant with infinite light, mysterious like the sun."¹

And Whit-Sunday carries us furthest into the mystery of light. How is it that we find the message of Whit-Sunday so difficult to face and to make our own?

1 Phillips Brooks.

Surely it is in part the fact that we are baffled by the mystery of light.

The Christian revelation is an ever-ascending progress from light to light; an ever-deepening closeness of approach of GOD to man. And to-day we are carried to the supreme point of contact in that approach, for to-day the Creator Spirit of the Universe claims as His home the heart of man. That is the mystery of light which baffles us. We are dazzled by our contact with the sun. We are in touch, on the one hand, with the eternal energy that pulses through all life. "The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world." And then we are bidden to look deep down into the very centre of our own personality, and to find there, like the flame in the heart of the opal, the fire of the Spirit of GOD Himself. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

That was the great truth which underlay the fire and wind of Pentecost. That is the truth at the heart of this mystery

of light, which matters so vitally to every man to-day. It was nothing less than the coming back of GOD into man. It was the promise in those typical men of how near GOD would be to every man henceforth. It was the revelation of GOD the Inspirer, as distinct from, and yet one with, GOD the Creator and GOD the Redeemer.

It was the crowning link in that knitting together of GOD and man which was wrought by the Incarnation of GOD the Son. And so the great challenge comes to us to-day to try to realise what we mean by the great confession: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord,—and Giver of Life." "The Giver of Life!" Have we ever realised before the exceeding preciousness of life to-day? To-day, when the whole world is draped with the black and scarlet of death? To-day, when the air is heavy with it,—to-day, when death hovers in the sky, and peeps up from the sea, and all our best and strongest are

under its shadow hour by hour? In this day of death's wildest carnival, life is our daily prayer and our daily offering.

A man asks himself to-day what is the most precious thing he can give to England, and the answer comes at once,—his life. Ask a million intercessors what is their hourly prayer, and they will tell you,—life. Life for those who bear the country's honour in their hands, and among them just those few,—their dearest and their best,—without whom the world is but a blank. Ask that growing multitude of mourners what is their heart's desire, and they will tell you,—life. Life for those who seemed so full of life the other day and now have made that supreme offering, and are silent in the majesty of death.

“Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” That is the cry from the heart of the Mother-land, as she gazes out with eyes that burn with the proud

tears she dare not shed, at the silent forms of that "exceeding great army." That is the call of faith,—our faith,—as we pledge our belief in the Holy Ghost, "the Lord, and Giver of Life."

For the Giver of Life does not really withdraw the gift that He has given. That is the splendid truth for which we stand. The gift of life is an individual gift and an eternal gift. And though the time comes when the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the mourners go about the streets,—yet the spirit returns unto GOD Who gave it. And we, who believe in the Giver of Life, know what the poet means when he sings:

"Oh! ever near us though unseen,
The dear immortal spirits tread,
For all the boundless Universe is life,
There are no dead!"

"All the boundless Universe is life," and the sacred link which runs through all, the life which stirs through earth and

paradise and Heaven, is the life of the one Life-giver. In Him, they and we are one. We breathe their life as they do ours, and both are of GOD. The life He lends to earth awhile and then receives again, is safe with Him till the day when earth renders her great account of the children she has borne, and the "exceeding great army" musters once more for the final overthrow of death and the final triumph of life.

That is a part of the mystery of light which we try to face to-day. Do not shrink from the baffling splendour of it. Do not let it elude you because you think it is too good to be true. To-day, man knows himself to be immortal. To-day, GOD gives him the image of His Own Eternity. Claim then to-day your share in that glorious life which beats at the heart of the world. The Life-giver is at work among us here and now. His working is infinitely minute, as well as infinitely great. It flashes in the soul of

a great nation, it sparkles in the reverent eyes of a little child. Every generous instinct you possess, every challenge you make to evil, every impulse you have to whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report, are the stirring within you of the world's Life-giver, and you are linked thereby to all that is great and good and permanently alive in this world and the next.

You are learning to drink of the River of Life, clear as crystal, which waters Paradise and wells from the Throne of GOD. Nothing can suppress or deaden or destroy that springing life within you but your own denial of it, your own sloth, your own defilement, your own faithlessness.

Lift up your heads to-day then, and claim that gift which is your crowning consecration. To the world's display of death, fling back the challenge of life.

The fruits of the Life-giver are love, joy, peace. By Him alone we can solve—

we shall solve—the world's intolerable burden of hatred, sorrow, war.

Remember always, that in all the darkness and death of to-day, life must have the last word.

And over the dead dryness and corruption of wilful human sin,—no less than over the smoking fields of physical human death,—the voices of all true men of vision cry out unceasingly to-day at the bidding of GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."



THE
SHRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Preached in ST. GEORGE'S, RAMSGATE, and
HOLY TRINITY, BROADSTAIRS, Trinity Sunday,
1915.

THE SHRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

ST. MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.—

“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

THESE are the words that are said over everyone of us at the most momentous moments in our lives. First, they stand in our Lord's parting deed of bequest to His disciples,—the Charter of Inauguration of His Church,—that all who from Ascension Day onwards should be incorporated into the Family of GOD should, in that crisis-moment of Baptism, be incorporated into the three-fold Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Or think of another crisis-moment in life,—a solemn scene which is taking place in nearly every Cathedral in England at this very hour,—that moment of awful solemnity when the young candidate for ordination kneels before the successor of the Apostles, and there the three-fold Name meets us again.

“Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of GOD, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of GOD, and of His holy Sacraments; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Or again, that solemn crisis when a man and woman are joined together before GOD as man and wife, it is in the name of the Holy Trinity that the ring is placed on the bride's finger, and the most solemn moment of the Marriage

Service culminates in the Priest's words :
"I pronounce that they be man and wife together, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Or once more, in that great moment when the sick man facing death with the sense of deadly sin upon him, or the penitent crushed and bewildered by repeated falls, trying to start his fight again, seeks absolution in a solemn confession of his sins to GOD in the presence of GOD'S Priest,—the words of absolution come to him in the same holy three-fold Name. "By His Authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

All the most solemn moments and crises of life then,—in Baptism, in Ordination, in Marriage, in Absolution,—are consecrated by the Name of the most Holy Trinity.

And to insist that this sacred Name

is no mere formula, no idle form of words, but involves tremendous issues for us, is the purpose and aim of this great,—essentially English,—Festival of Trinity Sunday.

It is an essentially English Festival, and its home is our own Diocese of Canterbury. For it was one of the most famous of our own Archbishops, St. Thomas the martyred Becket, who first inaugurated the Festival of Trinity Sunday in this diocese and province one hundred and fifty years before its importance was accepted by the rest of the Western Church, and still to this day we are the only branch of the Church to speak of the Sundays that are coming as the "Sundays after Trinity"; the rest of the Church calls them the "Sundays after Pentecost."

And what does Trinity Sunday stand for? It stands first of all as a witness to the importance of beliefs. It is strange—is it not?—and deeply significant, that

in spite of all our English insistence on the practical and the obvious, all our western suspicion of exalted faith, and our steady preference for action rather than belief, yet it should be England which for more than seven hundred years has stood out for a due recognition of the deepest mystery of the Christian faith; and that the Church which has moulded the mind of the English race should insist, as does no other Church in Christendom, on the vital reality of that final, mysterious statement as to the nature and being of GOD, which pledges us to the faith that the Name of GOD when written out in full is a three-fold Name.

The importance of beliefs! That is the whole basis of the Creed, called the Creed of St. Athanasius, which we sang this morning. There again, the recitation of that Creed at the public services of the Church is an entirely English custom; the practice is unknown

in the rest of Western Christendom. Perhaps some of you flinched a little this morning at some of the clauses in that Creed. I think we all do. Our instinct shrinks from anathemas to-day, even though they go no further than certain isolated passages in the Bible, and it will be an immense gain in every way when those so-called "damnatory" clauses are omitted, just as the equally severe anathemas which at one time were attached to the Nicene Creed have disappeared. But do not let your very natural shrinking from those severe warnings to people who forsake the faith they once held, make you overlook the careful and majestic positive statements of belief which the Creed contains. The Athanasian Creed is like some old war-worn banner, inscribed with the mottoes of many a gallant fight.

Almost every one of those positive statements of belief about the nature and being of GOD is there to correct some grievous error of false teaching, which,

one after another, in a way which it is almost impossible for us to realise to-day, threatened the very life of the early Church. All human language must necessarily fail to define the exact belief of Christendom, even the graceful flexible Greek of those early days; and it was only the fatal tendencies of those old heresies (which occasionally reappear in a new dress to-day) which forced the Church to attempt such definition. And so the Athanasian Creed finds its natural place in our service on Trinity Sunday, the day which stands as a witness to the importance of beliefs.

Is not such a witness needed at the present time? Is not the idea still very common that while it is important what a man does, it does not much matter what a man believes?—that while a man is responsible for his actions, he is wholly irresponsible for his thoughts?—that it does not much matter to society at large whether a man has right opinions or wrong opinions, or no opinions at all, on

moral and religious questions? Now, that is a doctrine which we must repudiate, which we must fight, with all the strength, with all the indignation, with all the energy which we can command, as the most dangerous of all heresies. It is destructive alike to individuals and to commonwealths: it is a flat denial of the truth-seeking instincts of our nature: it is a direct contradiction of common experience, and of universal history.

For history always teaches us that nations and societies are deeply and lastingly influenced by the ideas and beliefs which they have held. Dynasties have come and gone, institutions have flourished and decayed, but a religious belief, a living faith, a moral idea, surviving all changes, has influenced and swayed successive generations and successive races of men. We see it working out before our eyes to-day, this majesty of a moral ideal among the nations of the world. One little nation trampled to the

earth by the iron heel of murderous force, but never so evidently a sovereign nation, never so unconquerable as she is to-day, because of her faithfulness to an eternal moral ideal. Our own nation and our comrade-nations, at grips with death and agony incalculable, for the sake of a mighty faith, for the cause of eternal righteousness among the peoples of the earth.

Whatever the strain on material resource, whatever the loss in treasure or in precious lives, it is that intangible moral force, that unshakeable belief in the ideal, that faithfulness to an awakened sense of religious duty, which will carry us through. The importance of beliefs! Yes, that is the abiding lesson of the experience which has changed all life to-day. We are learning now that the measure of a nation's greatness is the measure of its faith.

And as with a nation, so it is with individuals.

People may point as they like to men exemplary and upright in private life,

conscientious, generous and pure, who profess no definite religious beliefs, and certainly admit no allegiance to the Christian faith; yet, high as the level of such lives may be, and often a reproach to us, Christianity, Christian faith and Christian morality, are higher still, and where the highest is possible, no man may rest content with a lower. When GOD has once spoken about Himself, in words so tremendous, and yet in words so seldom and so few, no man may dare to disregard them, or think belief in them unnecessary or optional.

This great English Festival to-day then is a protest against indifference to belief: but it is not only a protest against indifference to belief, it is also a witness to the vital importance of a particular belief. And that faith for which we stand brings us face to face to-day with the highest and purest conception man can reach in this life of the nature and personality of GOD. It tells us that,

taking into account the inadequacies of human language and the poverty of human thought, this one GOD is most correctly conceived of and spoken of as Father, Son, Spirit: Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier: as Three in One. "First I learn to believe in GOD the Father Who hath made me and all mankind." That is where we start. With the belief that there is One, Absolute, Eternal Being, from Whom all things have proceeded, and unto Whom all things shall return: that He is infinite Power, infinite Justice, infinite Wisdom, and, above all, He is infinite Love. That He is the Creator of the Universe and He is the Father of Mankind: His design is stamped on the world without: His Will is the law of our life within: and He is a Person.

It tells us again that this GOD has manifested Himself to the world that He has made. Manifested Himself in creation and in history: manifested Himself by special revelations from time to time.

GOD the Word, GOD the Son, is the agent of this manifestation. As the crowning revelation of all, He became incarnate, wrapped our human nature round His Divine Person, lived and died and rose from the dead as man.

“The right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord JESUS Christ, the Son of GOD, is GOD and Man.” Christ is GOD,—or our faith is vain. Faith in the Person of JESUS Christ, pledges us to belief in GOD the Son.

Finally, this Creed of ours tells us that GOD is present in us and about us always: that He acts upon us by this invisible presence: that, like the steady burning of a pure flame, He glows at the heart of all life: that, like the pulsations of air, He sweeps over us and through us, coming we know not whence, and going we know not whither: that this Presence is our Teacher, our Advocate, our Comforter, above all, our Sanctifier: that He, too, is a Person, speaking

directly to our personality, Spirit to spirit, Mind to mind : and so the Christian completes his Creed with : "I believe in GOD the Holy Ghost." This is the crown and summit of the Christian revelation, this faith which knits us by a three-fold cord to the Heart of GOD.

It has been well said that the Christian religion is like English architecture,—you cannot see everything from the west end. Next time you go to Canterbury and enter that essentially English Cathedral, notice how true that saying is, and how typical our Mother-Cathedral is of the Christian Creed. You enter the great Nave with its soaring simplicity and its Font, and its sense of strength and space and light. You have entered the Household of GOD, but the roof goes arching eastwards out of sight beyond the massive screen, and you are conscious of mighty glories yet beyond. You pass through the screen into the glorious choir, and there, in the far

distance, up the steps, is the stair of Confirmation and Ordination, and higher still the Altar. And still as you pass eastwards towards the light from mystery to mystery, you are aware that even beyond the Altar screen there are further mysteries still. And when at last you reach the furthest shrine, and stand under Becket's Crown, you are standing in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity. Like the myriad pilgrims who have worn those eastward-running rivers in the stones, you have reached the crown of your pilgrimage. The light pours through the miracle-windows suggesting further glories still, but further than the Shrine of the Holy Trinity you cannot go.

And so we have made our pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Holy Trinity to-day. The "I believe in" of the Creed, means for us "I commit myself to the power of"—and that is our strength for life. I commit myself to the power of GOD,—revealed to me at length as loving

Father, strong Redeemer, ever-present Friend. And just as that is my strength for life, so I may dare to look death in the face in the power of that same three-fold Name, and commit myself to that unknown land beyond: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."



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